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Jul 08
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NO. **73**

WILLINGHAM BUCKINGHAM LEIALOHA
WAR & PIECES
PART ONE OF THREE

AND SO WE WENT
TO WAR.

VOYAGE *of the* SKY TREADER

Chapter **WAR AND PIECES**
One of

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MOST OF YOU WHO KNOW ME KNOW I'VE HAD MY FILL OF WAR BEFORE AND HAD NO DESIRE TO RELIVE MY SO-CALLED HEROIC PAST.

LONG AGO I WAS PART OF AN ARMY THAT LOST NEARLY EVERY BATTLE WE FOUGHT. BY STEADY ATTRITION I LOST EVERY ONE OF MY FRIENDS, MY COMMANDERS AND MY COMRADES IN ARMS, ULTIMATELY LOSING THE HOMELANDS TO THE ADVERSARY AND HIS PUPPET EMPEROR.

BELIEVE ME, I WOULD'VE BEEN CONTENT TO BE A CLERK OR SOME OTHER SORT OF OFFICE DRONE FOR THE REST OF MY DAYS.

BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE.

REPORT FROM THE LOOKOUTS, SIR!
DRAGON SPOTTED AT FOUR O'CLOCK HIGH-- ABOUT TWO MILES OUT AND APPROACHING FAST!



AT LEAST THIS TIME WE PLANNED TO WIN.

FOR ONCE WE HAD NO INTENTION TO HOLD OUT AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, DOING THE BEST WE COULD IN A LOST CAUSE, FIGHTING A VALIANT BUT DOOMED CAMPAIGN.

STEADY AS SHE GOES, HELM. A SINGLE DRAGON ISN'T ENOUGH TO INTERRUPT OUR SCHEDULE.

MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE DUTY SNIPER. KINDLY REMOVE THAT CREATURE FROM MY SKY.

SIR!

HERE HE COMES!

THE OUTGOING DISPATCHES WILL BE READY MOMENTARILY, SIRRAH.

OKAY, I'M IN NO HURRY.

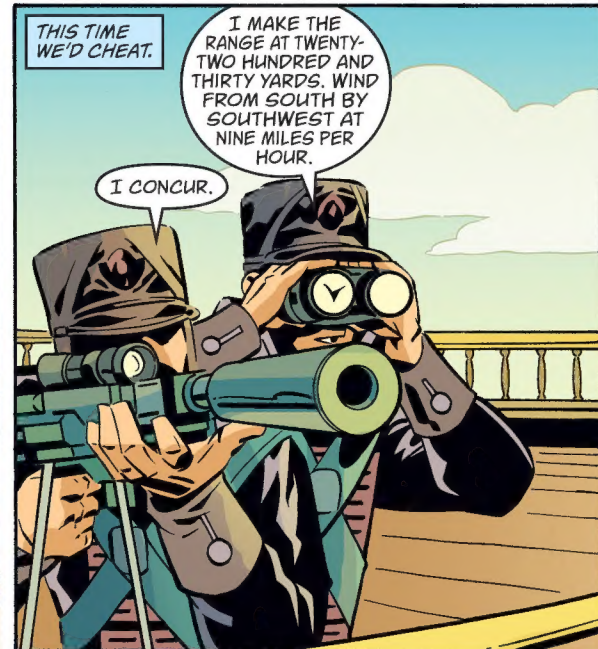


THIS TIME WE PLANNED TO ACT DECISIVELY, MEETING FORCE WITH OVERWHELMING FORCE, GIVING THE ENEMY NO CHANCE AT A FAIR FIGHT.



PRINCE CHARMING'S COMPLIMENTS! KILL THE DRAGON!

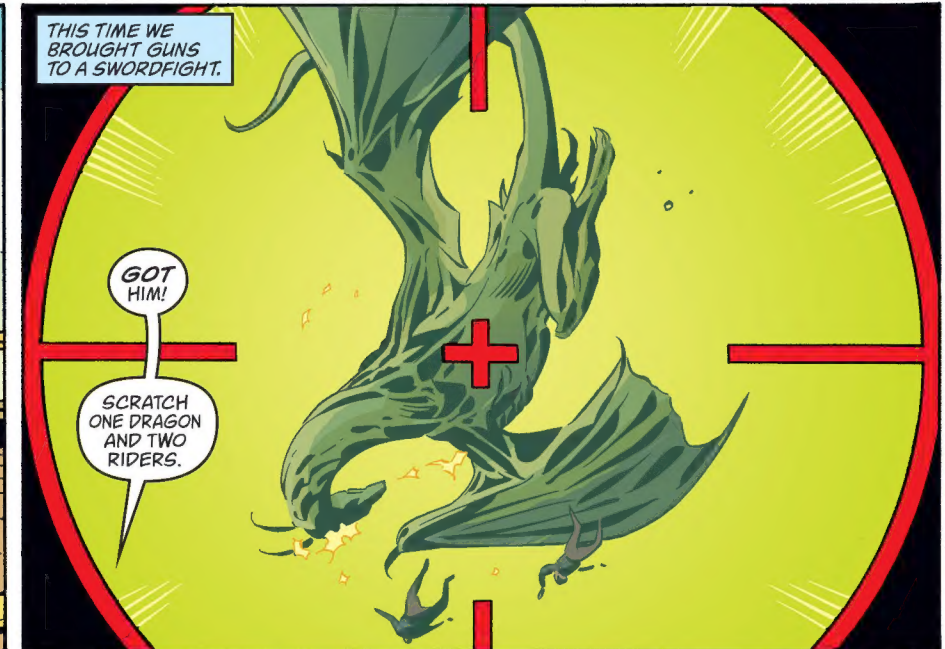
ROGER THAT!



THIS TIME WE'D CHEAT.

I MAKE THE RANGE AT TWENTY-TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY YARDS. WIND FROM SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST AT NINE MILES PER HOUR.

I CONCUR.



THIS TIME WE BROUGHT GUNS TO A SWORDFIGHT.

GOT HIM!

SCRATCH ONE DRAGON AND TWO RIDERS.



THE SHIP IS CALLED THE **GLORY OF BAGHDAD**. IT WAS CONSTRUCTED BY THE FREE ARABIAN FABLES, WITH OCCASIONAL ADVICE AND NUDGING FROM FABLETOWN.

DID YOU COLLECT THE DISPATCHES AND OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE FROM MY CABIN, BLUE?

YES, SIR. YOUR AIDE HAD THEM READY FOR ME. ANYTHING TO ADD? I'LL BE HEADING TO SITE BRAVO NEXT.

IT'S BASICALLY A BIG WOODEN BARREL KEPT ALOFT BY MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED FLYING CARPETS PRESSED BETWEEN THE INNER AND OUTER HULLS.

JUST THAT WE'VE MET ONLY **SPORADIC** RESISTANCE SINCE INITIAL INSERTION FOUR DAYS AGO. AND WE'RE WITHIN TWO DAYS OF OUR FIRST BOMBING TARGET.

WE'VE NOTICED ONLY A FEW SMALL ARMIES IN THE FIELD AND WE'RE EASILY ABLE TO NAVIGATE AROUND THEM.

SO FAR OUR PLANNED COMBAT STRATEGY SEEMS **SOUND**.

IT'S MANNED BY A MIXED BAGHDAD AND FABLETOWN CREW. CAPTAIN **SINBAD** COMMANDS THE SHIP AND HIS CREW OF ARABIAN FABLES--

TELL YOUR MISTER BIGBY WOLF THAT THIS SHIP IS UNBEATABLE. I DOUBT WE'LL NEED HIM TO HOLD OUR--WHAT IS THE TERM YOU ANGLU FABLES USE--OUR "BACK DOOR" OUT?

THE EMPIRE CAN'T PUT **ANYTHING** IN THE AIR TO CHALLENGE US.

--WHILE PRINCE CHARMING IS COMMANDER OF COMBAT OPERATIONS, BASICALLY THOSE MANNING THE GUNS ARE ALL WESTERN FABLETOWN FABLES.

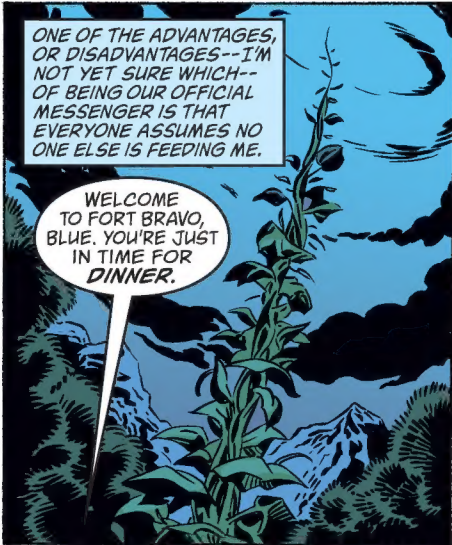
HOW SOON DO YOU HAVE TO LEAVE? CARE TO JOIN US IN THE OFFICERS' MESS FOR DINNER?

UHM...

OF COURSE YOU CAN. IT'S ROAST RIB OF BULL TONIGHT IN APRICOT GLAZE--


--ONE OF THE CHEF'S **SIGNATURE** SPECIALTIES.






ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES, OR DISADVANTAGES--I'M NOT YET SURE WHICH-- OF BEING OUR OFFICIAL MESSENGER IS THAT EVERYONE ASSUMES NO ONE ELSE IS FEEDING ME.

WELCOME TO FORT BRAVO, BLUE. YOU'RE JUST IN TIME FOR DINNER.



OKAY, OUR "FORT" ISN'T TOO FORTIFIED YET, BUT WE'RE WORKING ON IT.

ACTUALLY, I JUST ATE, BIGBY. I'M STUFFED.




THE TRICK IS MAKING FORTIFICATIONS THAT DON'T SHOW FROM A DISTANCE.

WE DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT HOW TO HIDE THE BEANSTALK, SINCE IT'S IMAGINARY UNTIL YOU GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO IT. KEEPING OUR OTHER PREPARATIONS JUST AS *INVISIBLE* WON'T BE SO EASY.



MOST OF MY TROOPS JUST PARACHUTED IN FROM THE CLOUD KINGDOMS THIS MORNING.

WE'LL BE GETTING THE BIGGER TROOPS AND BIG SUPPLY DROPS AT FIRST LIGHT TOMORROW.



HOW ARE THE FLYBOYS DOING ON THAT DAMNED SHIP? NO WAY TO HIDE THAT.

NO, I GET THE IMPRESSION THEY *LIKE* THE FACT THAT THEY STAND OUT. THEY EXPECT TO ATTRACT LOTS OF ATTENTION.

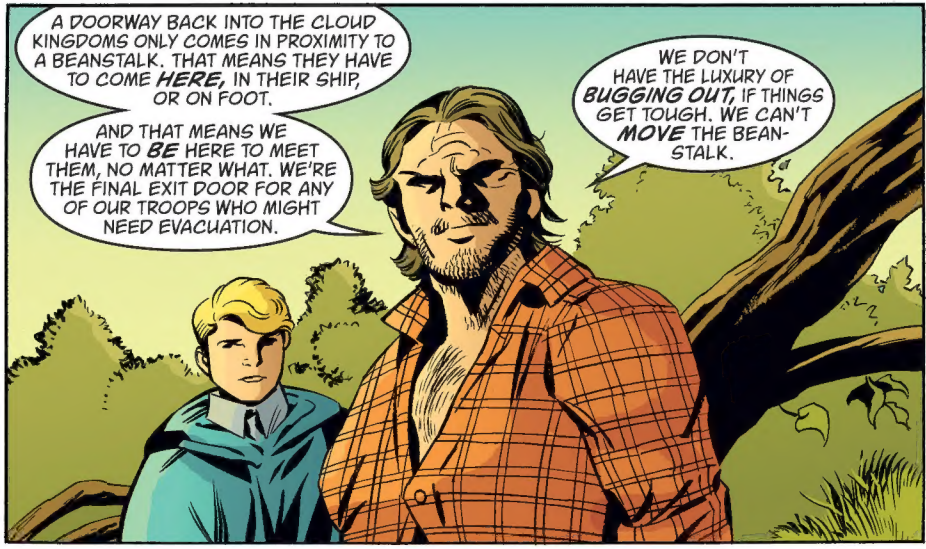


I STUCK AROUND LONG ENOUGH TO HEAR BIGBY ADDRESS HIS TROOPS THE NEXT DAY.

FABLES AND WARRIORS OF FORT BRAVO! OUR TASK IN THE WAR IS A SIMPLE ONE!

WE'VE PLANTED THE LAST REMAINING MAGIC BEAN HERE, IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, TO PROVIDE A LAST DITCH, BACK DOOR ESCAPE ROUTE OUT OF THE IMPERIAL HOMEWORLD.

IF THINGS GO **BAD** FOR THE SKYSHIP, THEY CAN'T SIMPLY RISE UP THROUGH THE CLOUDS AND FIND THEMSELVES BACK SAFE IN THE CLOUD KINGDOMS.



A DOORWAY BACK INTO THE CLOUD KINGDOMS ONLY COMES IN PROXIMITY TO A BEANSTALK. THAT MEANS THEY HAVE TO COME **HERE**, IN THEIR SHIP, OR ON FOOT.

AND THAT MEANS WE HAVE TO **BE** HERE TO MEET THEM, NO MATTER WHAT. WE'RE THE FINAL EXIT DOOR FOR ANY OF OUR TROOPS WHO MIGHT NEED EVACUATION.

WE DON'T HAVE THE LUXURY OF **BUGGING OUT**, IF THINGS GET TOUGH. WE CAN'T **MOVE** THE BEANSTALK.



AND WE CAN'T JUST PLANT A **NEW** ONE SOMEWHERE ELSE, BECAUSE THIS IS THE LAST ONE WE HAVE.

SO, NO MATTER **WHAT**, NO MATTER WHAT GOES **WRONG**, OR WHAT FORCES THE EMPIRE SENDS AGAINST US, WE STAND **FAST**. WE HOLD ON. WE DON'T SURRENDER AND DON'T RETREAT.



WE NEED TO **HOLD...THIS...GROUND**.



AND WHEN ALL OF THIS IS **OVER**--WHEN THE LAST SHOT'S FIRED--WE'LL BE THE **LAST** TO GO HOME.

THE SHOOTING WAR DIDN'T BEGIN WITH US. THE SKYSHIP, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS ALREADY TAKEN FIRE, AND GIVEN IT BACK WITH TRUE GUSTO. BUT HOWEVER IT TURNS OUT, THE WAR WILL END **HERE**.

FORT BRAVO'S GREATEST HOPE WAS IN REMAINING UNDETECTED. TRUE, THEY WERE ON THE IMPERIAL HOMEWORLD, BUT FAR REMOVED FROM CALABRI ANAGNI AND THE RULING CITY.

IT'S CLEARLY MADE OF WOOD, SO IT **SHOULD** BURN, BUT WE CAN'T GET A DRAGON CLOSE ENOUGH TO IT.



THERE'S NO REASON EMPIRE TROOPS SHOULD GO LOOKING FOR AN ENEMY CAMP IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE-- NOT WITH A PERFECTLY GOOD TARGET FLOATING OVER THEIR HEADS.

EACH TIME WE TRY, THEY SHOOT IT OUT OF THE SKY IN SOME MANNER WE DON'T QUITE UNDER-**ST**AND.

THEY'RE USING MODERN GUNS, NO DOUBT.



WHAT ABOUT OUR MILITARY SORCERERS? WHAT HAVE THEY TRIED?

NOTHING SUCCESSFUL, SIRE. EVERY TIME ONE OF THEM MANEUVERS CLOSE ENOUGH TO THROW A SPELL, HE'S SHOT DOWN BEFORE ONE CAN SO MUCH AS SAY "JACK FROST."

DON'T SPEAK THAT NAME AGAIN, CRETIN CHILD. I DON'T LIKE IT.



MY DEEPEST APOLOGIES, GREAT MISTRESS. BUT THEY SEEM TO BE ABLE TO **SPOT** OUR SORCERERS FROM A GREAT DISTANCE AND TELL THEM APART FROM THE OTHERS.

MOST ARE CUT DOWN IN THE MIDST OF DOING **ORDINARY** ACTIVITIES-- WHILE CROSSING THE STREET, OR TAKING A DRINK OF WATER FROM A WELL, OR--





YES, WE **QUITE** UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU MEAN BY "ORDINARY ACTIVITIES." YOU DON'T NEED TO LIST **EVERY** POSSIBLE EXAMPLE.

AH, YES, SO IN ANY CASE, THE SORCERER IS OFTEN **DEAD** EVEN BEFORE WE KNEW ANY ENEMY IS NEAR.

ONLY **THEN** DO WE SPOT THE THING SILENTLY DRIFTING MORE THAN A MILE DISTANT.

THE SOLUTION SEEMS SIMPLE ENOUGH. DRESS OUR WARLOCK SORCERERS LIKE NORMAL TROOPS AND MOVE THEM INTO RANGE WHILE IN THE RANKS OF A GREATER COMPANY.

LET THE ENEMY PICK OFF AS MANY COMMON SOLDIERS AS THEY LIKE, WHILE LOOKING FOR THE FEW THAT MATTER.

WE ALREADY TRIED THAT, LORD. BUT WHENEVER WE MARCH TOWARDS THE THING EN MASSE, IT SIMPLY TURNS AND FLOATS AWAY. IT REFUSES ALL **ATTEMPTS** AT FORMAL BATTLE.

NO, BUT IT SEEMS AN **EFFECTIVE** ONE SO FAR.

THAT'S NOT RIGHT! THAT ISN'T A FIT WAY TO CONDUCT A WAR!

ANOTHER TROUBLE IS WE'VE SO FEW WARLOCKS LEFT AMONG OUR FORCES. SINCE MOST OF THEM THROUGHOUT THE EMPIRE WERE SUMMONED **HERE** FOR RETRAINING--

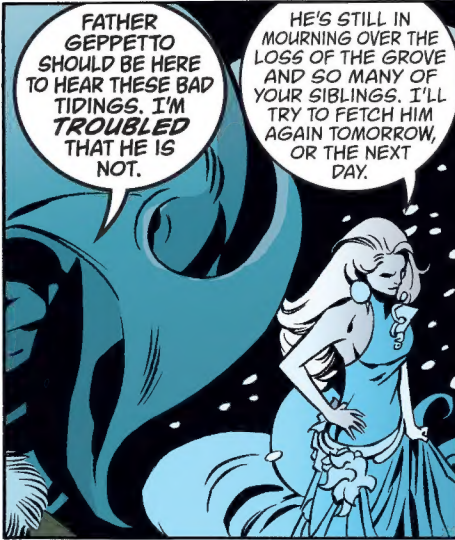
I TRULY HOPE YOU AREN'T ABOUT TO QUESTION IMPERIAL **WISDOM**. WE DIDN'T BRING YOU HERE TO **CRITICIZE** US.

LEAVE US SO THAT WE MAY TAKE COUNSEL AMONG OURSELVES.

SIRE.

BUT DON'T **GO** FAR, IN CASE WE NEED YOU.





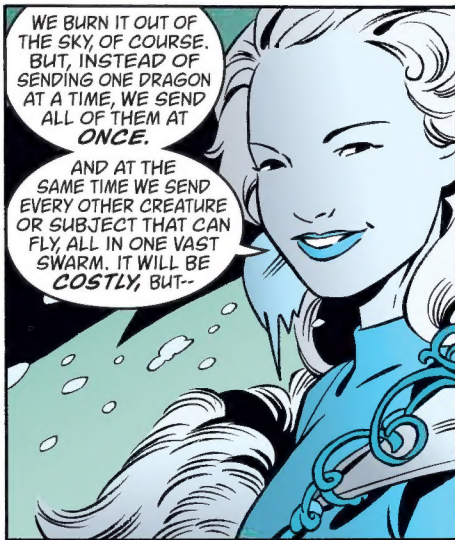
FATHER GEPPETTO SHOULD BE HERE TO HEAR THESE BAD TIDINGS. I'M TROUBLED THAT HE IS NOT.

HE'S STILL IN MOURNING OVER THE LOSS OF THE GROVE AND SO MANY OF YOUR SIBLINGS. I'LL TRY TO FETCH HIM AGAIN TOMORROW, OR THE NEXT DAY.



BUT IN THE MEANTIME WE MUST FEND FOR OURSELVES. FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THE EMPIRE'S IN OUR HANDS ALONE FOR NOW.

SO WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT THIS UNTOUCHABLE SHIP IN THE SKY?



WE BURN IT OUT OF THE SKY, OF COURSE. BUT, INSTEAD OF SENDING ONE DRAGON AT A TIME, WE SEND ALL OF THEM AT ONCE.

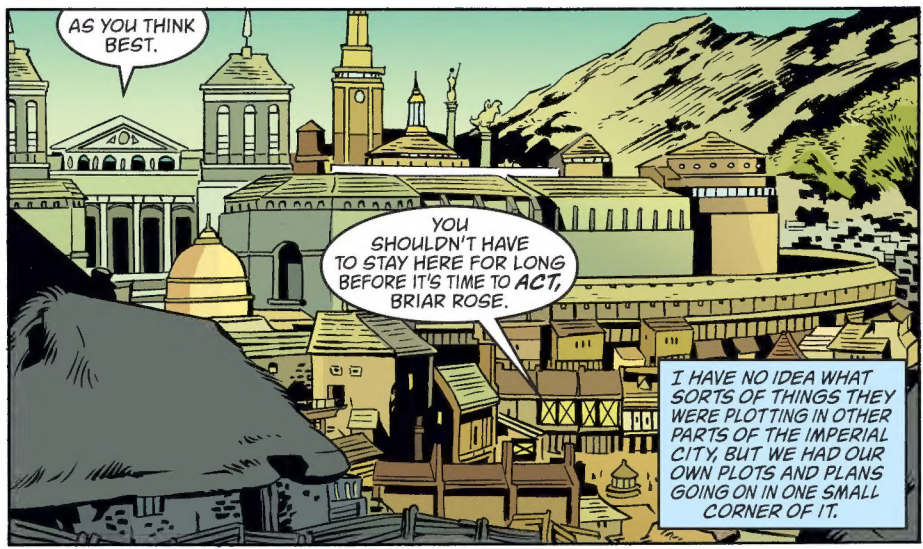
AND AT THE SAME TIME WE SEND EVERY OTHER CREATURE OR SUBJECT THAT CAN FLY, ALL IN ONE VAST SWARM. IT WILL BE COSTLY, BUT--



BUT OVERWHELMING. I LIKE IT. I'LL GIVE THAT ORDER.

HOWEVER, WE'LL SEND EVERY REMAINING DRAGON SAVE ONE.

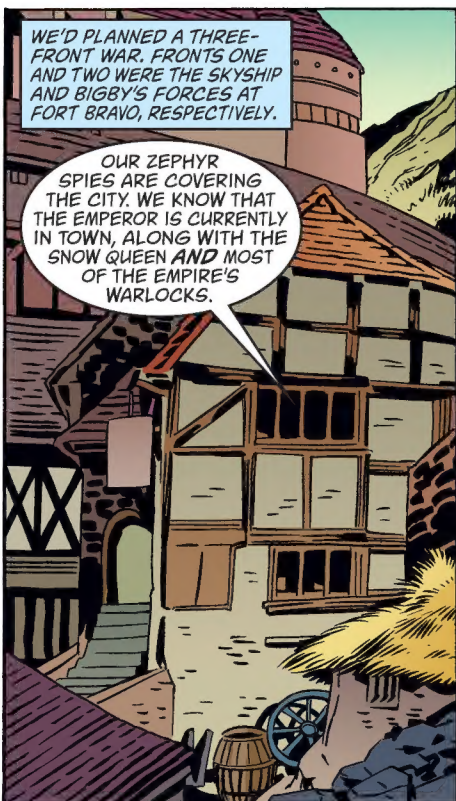
IF THIS TACTIC DOESN'T WORK, I HAVE ANOTHER IDEA WE MIGHT NEED TO TRY.



AS YOU THINK BEST.

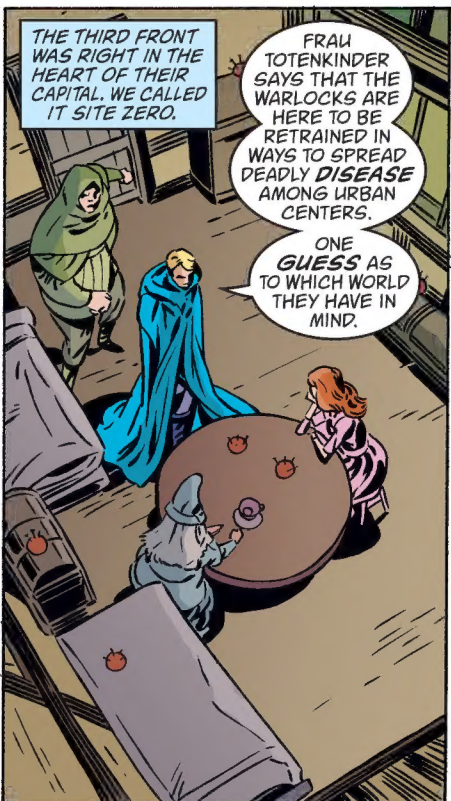
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO STAY HERE FOR LONG BEFORE IT'S TIME TO ACT, BRIAR ROSE.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT SORTS OF THINGS THEY WERE PLOTTING IN OTHER PARTS OF THE IMPERIAL CITY, BUT WE HAD OUR OWN PLOTS AND PLANS GOING ON IN ONE SMALL CORNER OF IT.



WE'D PLANNED A THREE-FRONT WAR. FRONTS ONE AND TWO WERE THE SKYSHIP AND BIGBY'S FORCES AT FORT BRAVO, RESPECTIVELY.

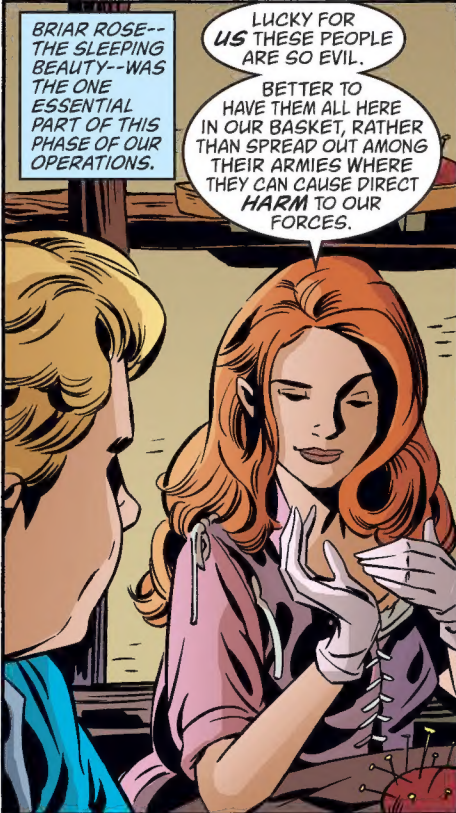
OUR ZEPHYR SPIES ARE COVERING THE CITY. WE KNOW THAT THE EMPEROR IS CURRENTLY IN TOWN, ALONG WITH THE SNOW QUEEN AND MOST OF THE EMPIRE'S WARLOCKS.



THE THIRD FRONT WAS RIGHT IN THE HEART OF THEIR CAPITAL. WE CALLED IT SITE ZERO.

FRAU TOTENKINDER SAYS THAT THE WARLOCKS ARE HERE TO BE RETRAINED IN WAYS TO SPREAD DEADLY DISEASE AMONG URBAN CENTERS.

ONE GUESS AS TO WHICH WORLD THEY HAVE IN MIND.



BRIAR ROSE-- THE SLEEPING BEAUTY-- WAS THE ONE ESSENTIAL PART OF THIS PHASE OF OUR OPERATIONS.

LUCKY FOR US THESE PEOPLE ARE SO EVIL.

BETTER TO HAVE THEM ALL HERE IN OUR BASKET, RATHER THAN SPREAD OUT AMONG THEIR ARMIES WHERE THEY CAN CAUSE DIRECT HARM TO OUR FORCES.



SHE COULD SINGLE-HANDEDLY TAKE MOST OF THE IMPERIAL BUREAUCRACY OUT OF PLAY WITH ONE PRICK OF HER FINGER.

TRUE ENOUGH. BASICALLY ALL WE NEED NOW IS GEPPETTO. AS SOON AS HE COMES DOWN INTO THE CITY WE'VE GOT EVERYONE WE WANT IN THE NET.

HAKIM IS HERE TO PROTECT BRIAR ROSE, IN CASE THE BAD GUYS FIND THIS HOVEL.

JUST SIT TIGHT UNTIL THEN. NEVER GO OUTSIDE. NEVER ANSWER THE DOOR. AND DON'T ACT UNTIL I GIVE YOU THE OFFICIAL GO-AHEAD.

UNLESS THEY DISCOVER US.

THAT'S RIGHT.

MRS. SOMEONE IS HERE FROM THE WOODLAND'S 13TH FLOOR TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE ZEPHYRS, OUR INVISIBLE SPIES IN THE CITY.

IN THAT CASE GRAB A NEEDLE AND IMMEDIATELY PRICK A FINGER--AND WE'LL JUST HAVE TO SETTLE FOR WHOEVER WE HAVE IN THE NET AT THE TIME.

AND WHILE YOU'RE HERE, BRIAR ROSE, NEVER BE MORE THAN AN ARM'S REACH FROM A NEEDLE.

YES, BLUE, I'VE BEEN FULLY BRIEFED. I KNOW WHAT TO DO IF THEY FIND US HERE.

WHEN THAT HAPPENS REST ASSURED THAT I WILL PROVIDE THE SECONDS SHE NEEDS TO ACT. NO ONE WILL GET PAST ME WHILE I STILL LIVE.

FAIR ENOUGH, HAKIM. I'M OFF, THEN. ANYTHING YOU WANT ME TO BRING ON MY NEXT VISIT?

MORE BLANKETS. IT GETS COOL AT NIGHT HERE.

MORE MINT TEA.

MORE HAPPYTIME INDIVIDUALLY WRAPPED SNACK CAKES WITH THE CHOCOLATE CREAM FILLING.

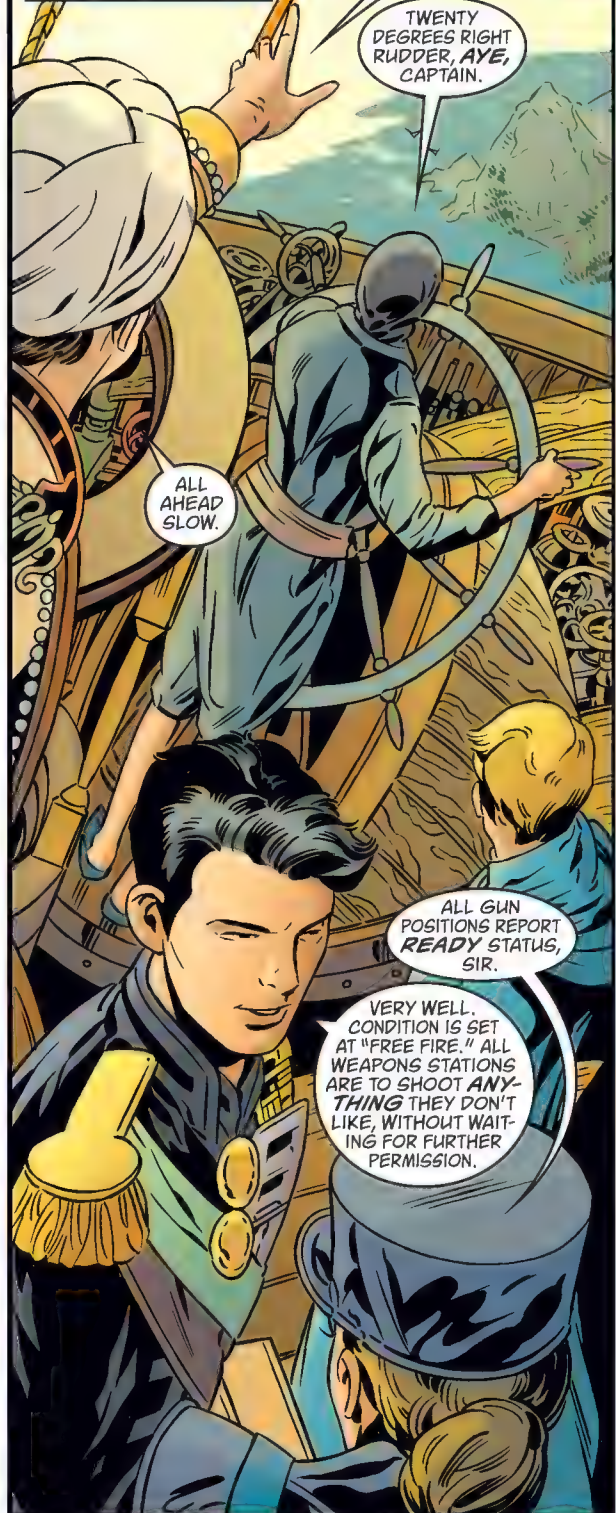
WHEN THE *GLORY OF BAGHDAD* REACHED THE SITE OF ITS FIRST BOMBING MISSION, I MADE SURE I WAS THERE TO SEE IT. ANOTHER ADVANTAGE OF BEING A MESSENGER WHO CAN BE ANYWHERE IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.



TARGET IN SIGHT.



I TRIED TO STAY OUT OF EVERYONE'S WAY WHILE STILL GETTING TO SEE EVERYTHING.



HELM, TWENTY DEGREES RIGHT RUDDER.

TWENTY DEGREES RIGHT RUDDER, AYE, CAPTAIN.

ALL AHEAD SLOW.

ALL GUN POSITIONS REPORT **READY** STATUS, SIR.

VERY WELL. CONDITION IS SET AT "FREE FIRE." ALL WEAPONS STATIONS ARE TO SHOOT **ANYTHING** THEY DON'T LIKE, WITHOUT WAITING FOR FURTHER PERMISSION.



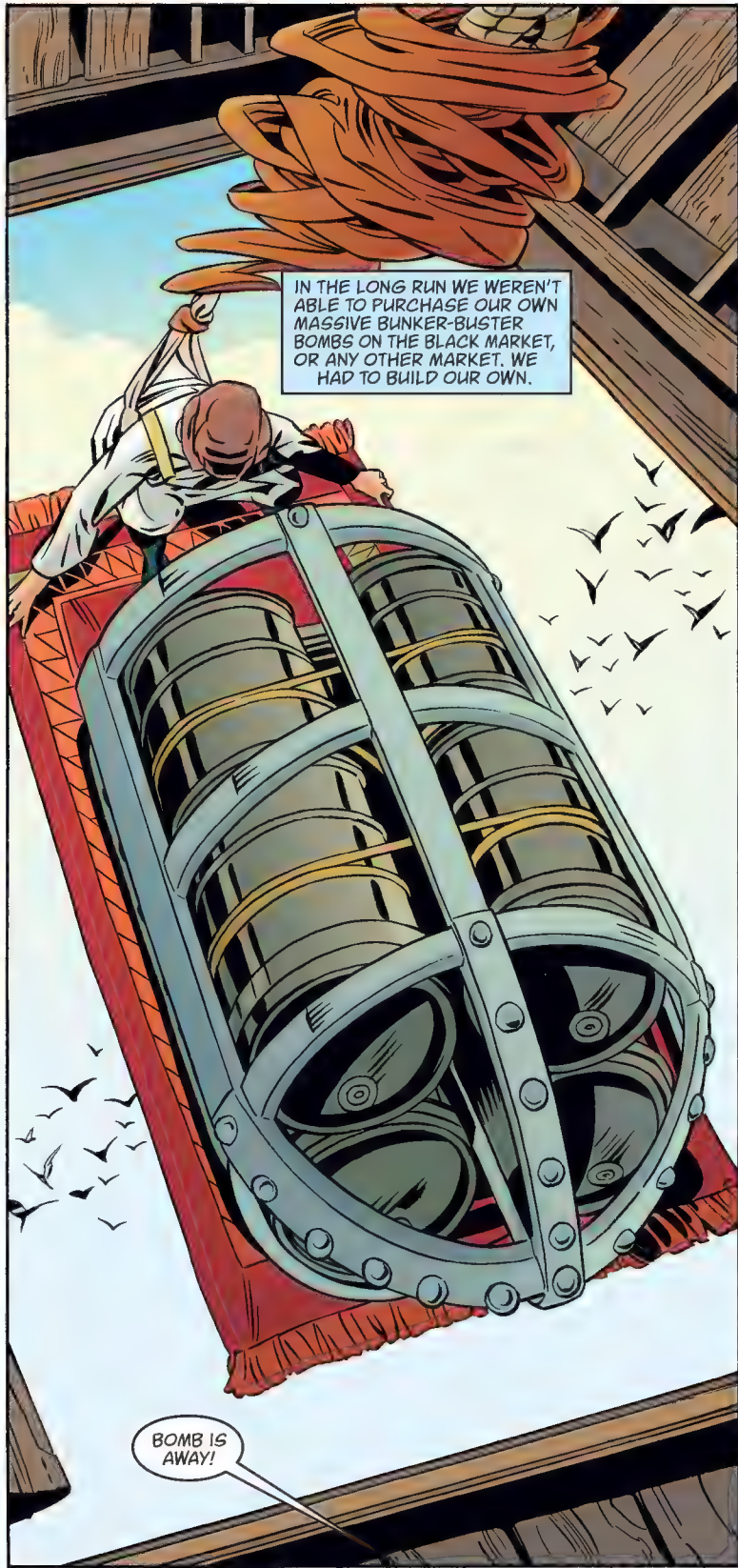


WE'RE OVER THE TARGET, CAPTAIN.

VERY WELL. PRINCE CHARMING, YOU ARE NOW IN COMMAND OF THE SHIP AND BOTH CREWS.

OPEN BOMB BAY DOORS.

COMMENCE BOMBING ACTION NUMBER ONE.

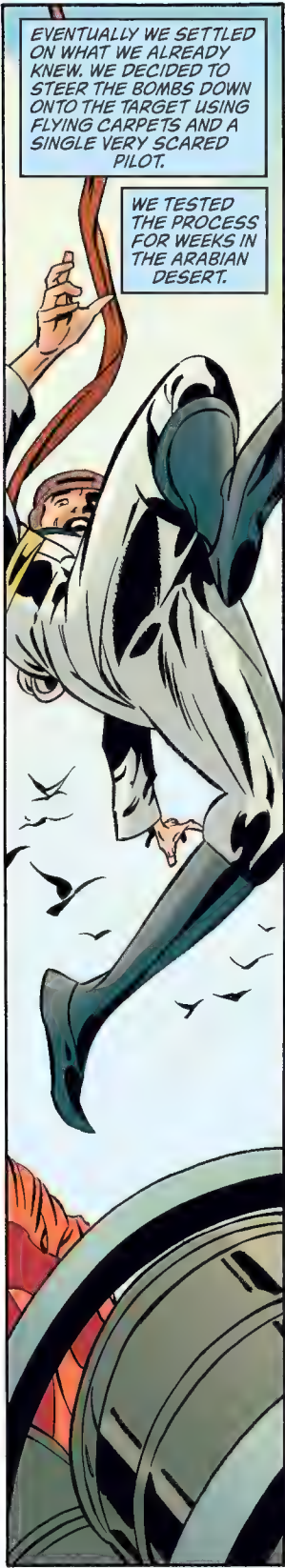


IN THE LONG RUN WE WEREN'T ABLE TO PURCHASE OUR OWN MASSIVE BUNKER-BUSTER BOMBS ON THE BLACK MARKET, OR ANY OTHER MARKET. WE HAD TO BUILD OUR OWN.

BOMB IS AWAY!



GETTING SOMETHING WITH ENOUGH "BOOM" WASN'T THAT HARD. THE REAL TRICK WAS BUILDING A GUIDANCE SYSTEM TO MAKE SURE THE THINGS LAND WHERE WE NEED THEM TO.



EVENTUALLY WE SETTLED ON WHAT WE ALREADY KNEW. WE DECIDED TO STEER THE BOMBS DOWN ONTO THE TARGET USING FLYING CARPETS AND A SINGLE VERY SCARED PILOT.

WE TESTED THE PROCESS FOR WEEKS IN THE ARABIAN DESERT.

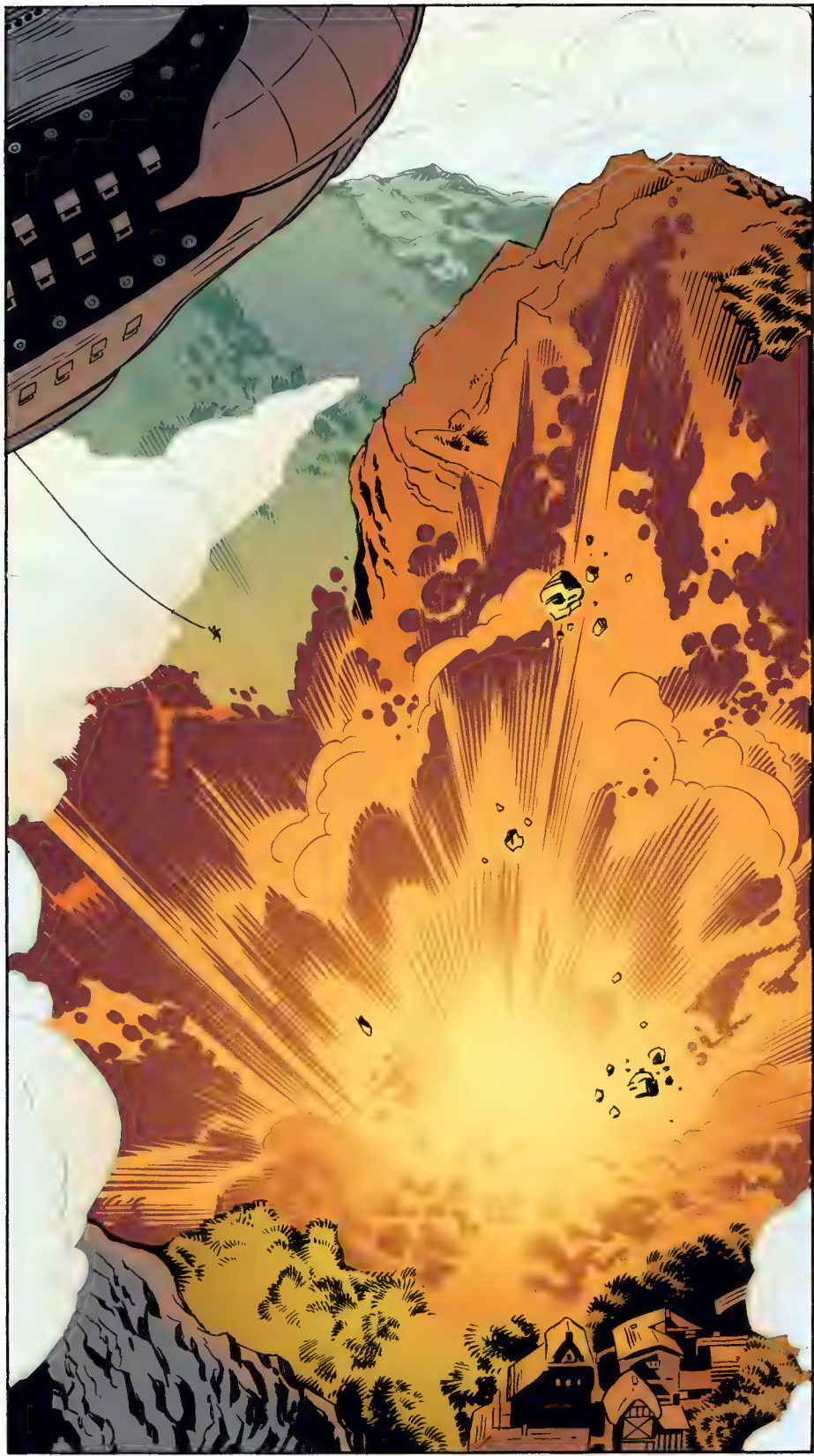


IT WORKED. THE CARPETS WERE ABLE TO STEER THE FALLING BOMBS JUST ENOUGH TO MAKE SURE THEY FELL PRETTY MUCH WHERE WE WANTED THEM TO.

GO, YOU MOTHERLESS WHORE!
GO!

GRANTED, OUR METHOD OF RECOVERING THE PILOT ALIVE WAS A BIT PRIMITIVE--AND DECIDEDLY NOT COMFORTABLE--BUT IT WORKED, TOO.





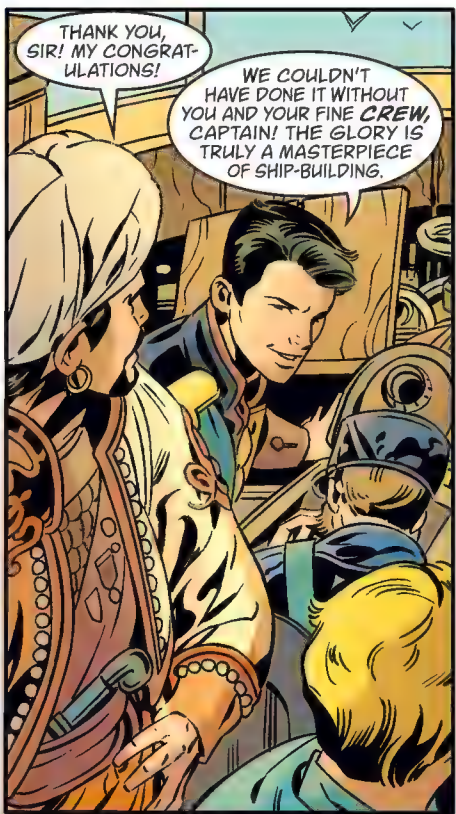


WE HAVE A GOOD EXPLOSION! RIGHT ON TARGET!

SPLendid! Well Done!

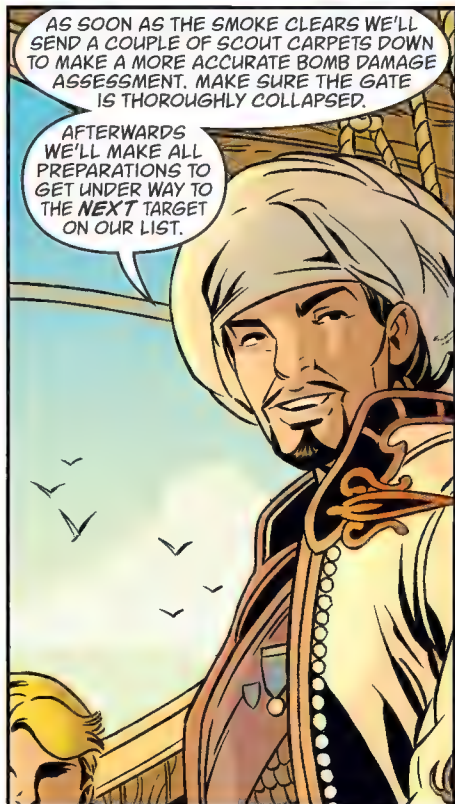
THAT'S ONE GATEWAY DOWN AND TWENTY-SEVEN MORE TO GO.

CAPTAIN SINBAD, I TURN COMMAND OF THE SHIP BACK OVER TO YOU.



THANK YOU, SIR! MY CONGRATULATIONS!

WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU AND YOUR FINE CREW, CAPTAIN! THE GLORY IS TRULY A MASTERPIECE OF SHIP-BUILDING.



AS SOON AS THE SMOKE CLEARS WE'LL SEND A COUPLE OF SCOUT CARPETS DOWN TO MAKE A MORE ACCURATE BOMB DAMAGE ASSESSMENT. MAKE SURE THE GATE IS THOROUGHLY COLLAPSED.

AFTERWARDS WE'LL MAKE ALL PREPARATIONS TO GET UNDER WAY TO THE NEXT TARGET ON OUR LIST.



AND JUST LIKE THAT, ONE TWENTY-EIGHTH OF OPERATION JACK KETCH WAS COMPLETE. WE WERE ON COURSE AND ON SCHEDULE IN OUR PLANS TO CUT THE BLOODY EMPIRE'S HEAD OFF.

I THINK SOME CHAMPAGNE AT DINNER TONIGHT MIGHT BE IN ORDER, DON'T YOU, MY FRIEND?

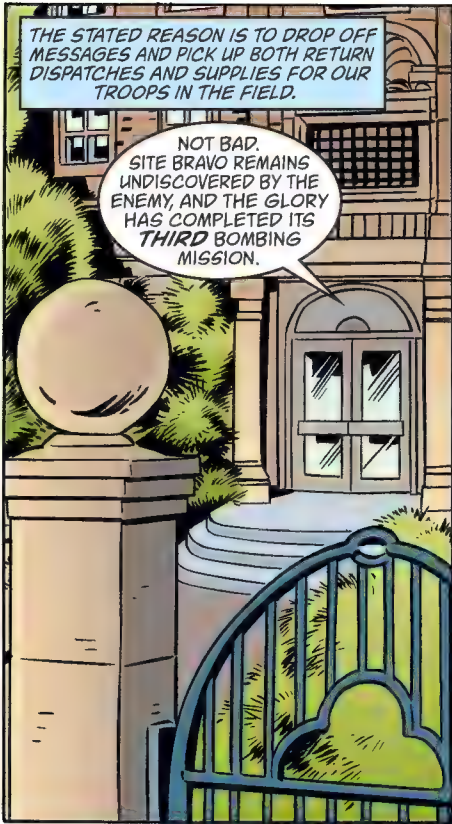
I HEARTILY AGREE! MR. BLUE, OF COURSE YOU'LL STAY TO JOIN US FOR DINNER! I'LL ORDER MY CHEF TO PREPARE SUCH A VICTORY FEAST AS HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN BEFORE!





AT LEAST ONCE A DAY MY TELEPORTATION ROTATION TAKES ME BACK TO FABLETOWN.

HOW'S IT GOING OUT THERE, BLUE? HOW ARE WE DOING?



THE STATED REASON IS TO DROP OFF MESSAGES AND PICK UP BOTH RETURN DISPATCHES AND SUPPLIES FOR OUR TROOPS IN THE FIELD.

NOT BAD. SITE BRAVO REMAINS UNDISCOVERED BY THE ENEMY, AND THE GLORY HAS COMPLETED ITS **THIRD BOMBING MISSION.**

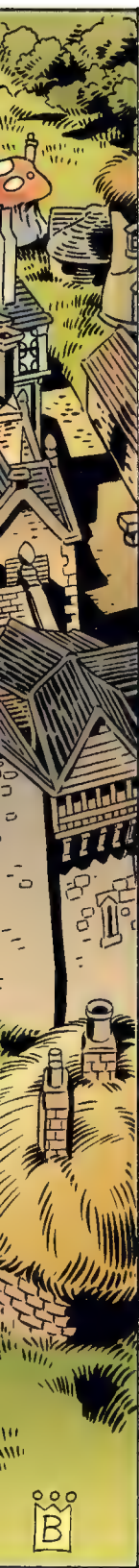
BUT THE REAL REASON IS TO MAKE SURE FABLETOWN HASN'T BEEN INVADED. YOU CAN'T TELL FROM OUT ON THE STREET, BUT WE'VE TURNED THE NEIGHBORHOOD INTO AN ARMED FORTRESS.

CASUALTIES?

NONE TO SPEAK OF SO FAR, BEAST. PRIVATE CEDARHEART SHOT HIMSELF IN THE ARM WHILE CLEANING HIS RIFLE, BUT NO ENEMY-INFLICTED CASUALTIES.

CEDARHEART? I SEEM TO RECALL WHEN HE CAME THROUGH HERE, WAS IT MERE **CLUMSINESS** OR WAS HE TRYING FOR A COWARD'S DISCHARGE?

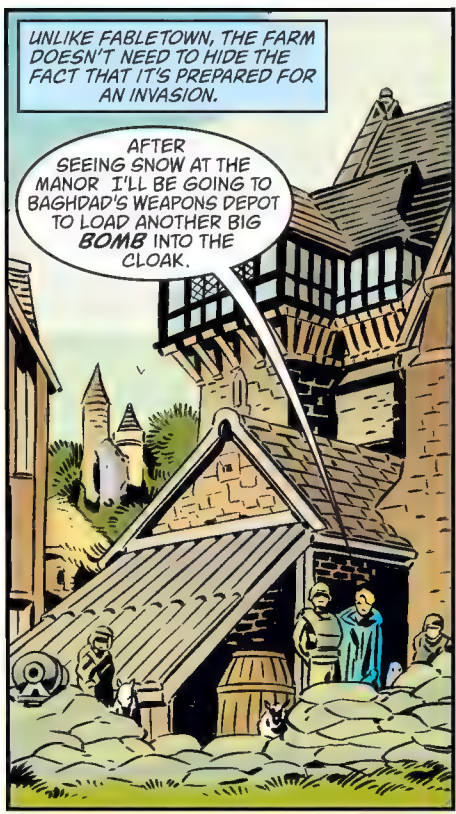
YES, WE MADE SURE THE IMPERIAL GATEWAY TO OUR WORLD--THE TIERRA DEL FUEGO GATE--WAS THE FIRST WE DESTROYED, BUT WHO KNOWS IF THAT WAS THE ONLY ONE?



WHO CAN SAY? I DON'T KNOW THE FELLOW.

HERE'S THE DAILY PACKET FOR WOLF MANOR.

DID YOU GET A CHANCE TO SHOP FOR MORE OF HAKIM'S SNACK CAKES? HE GOES THROUGH THEM DAILY.



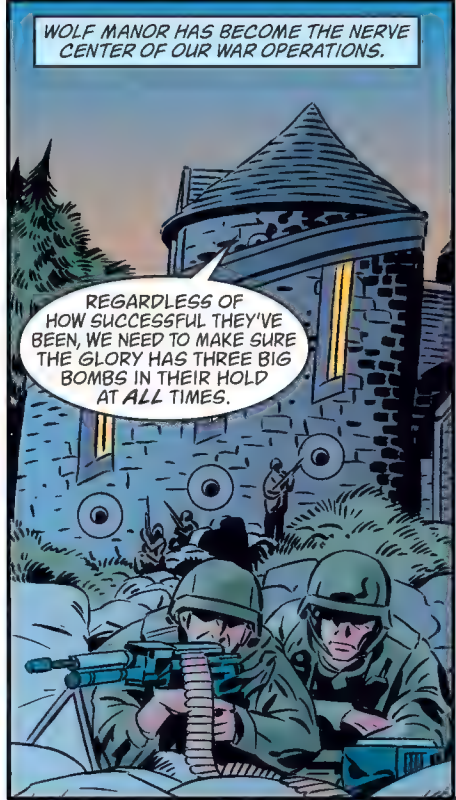
UNLIKE FABLETOWN, THE FARM DOESN'T NEED TO HIDE THE FACT THAT IT'S PREPARED FOR AN INVASION.

AFTER SEEING SNOW AT THE MANOR I'LL BE GOING TO BAGHDAD'S WEAPONS DEPOT TO LOAD ANOTHER BIG BOMB INTO THE CLOAK.



OH, *GOOD*. CAN YOU TAKE ME UP TO WOLF MANOR WITH YOU? I WAS SUPPOSED TO GET UP THERE THIS MORNING, BUT ADMINISTRATING THINGS CAME UP AND--

SURE. NO PROBLEM, ROSE.



WOLF MANOR HAS BECOME THE NERVE CENTER OF OUR WAR OPERATIONS.

REGARDLESS OF HOW SUCCESSFUL THEY'VE BEEN, WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THE GLORY HAS THREE BIG BOMBS IN THEIR HOLD AT ALL TIMES.

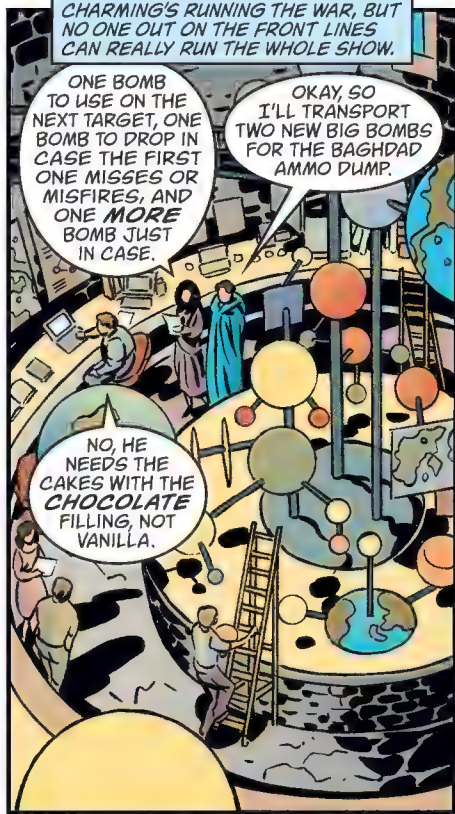


THE OFFICIAL WORD IS THAT PRINCE CHARMING'S RUNNING THE WAR, BUT NO ONE OUT ON THE FRONT LINES CAN REALLY RUN THE WHOLE SHOW.

ONE BOMB TO USE ON THE NEXT TARGET, ONE BOMB TO DROP IN CASE THE FIRST ONE MISSES OR MISFIRES, AND ONE **MORE** BOMB JUST IN CASE.

OKAY, SO I'LL TRANSPORT TWO NEW BIG BOMBS FOR THE BAGHDAD AMMO DUMP.

NO, HE NEEDS THE CAKES WITH THE **CHOCOLATE** FILLING, NOT VANILLA.



SNOW WHITE IS **REALLY** KEEPING ALL OF THE DISPARATE PARTS TOGETHER. EVEN WITHOUT AN OFFICIAL TITLE, SHE'S THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

NOW, HERE ARE TWO ADDITIONAL TARGETS FOR BOMBING. GET THESE TO THE GLORY AS SOON AS YOU CAN.

TWO ADDITIONAL GATEWAYS? BUT-HOW DO WE **SUD-DENLY** KNOW ABOUT TWO NEW GATEWAYS WE DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT BEFORE?



I HAVE TO CONFESS I LIKE WORKING WITH HER AGAIN.

WE'VE COME ACROSS A NEW SOURCE OF INTEL WE DIDN'T **HAVE** LAST WEEK. I CAN'T TELL YOU THE **PARTICULARS**, SINCE YOU TRAVEL IN-THEATER WHERE YOU COULD BE CAPTURED.

BUT YOU'RE GOING TO BE HAPPY WHEN YOU LEARN THE SOURCE. FOR NOW JUST UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS HIGHLY **RELIABLE** INFORMATION.

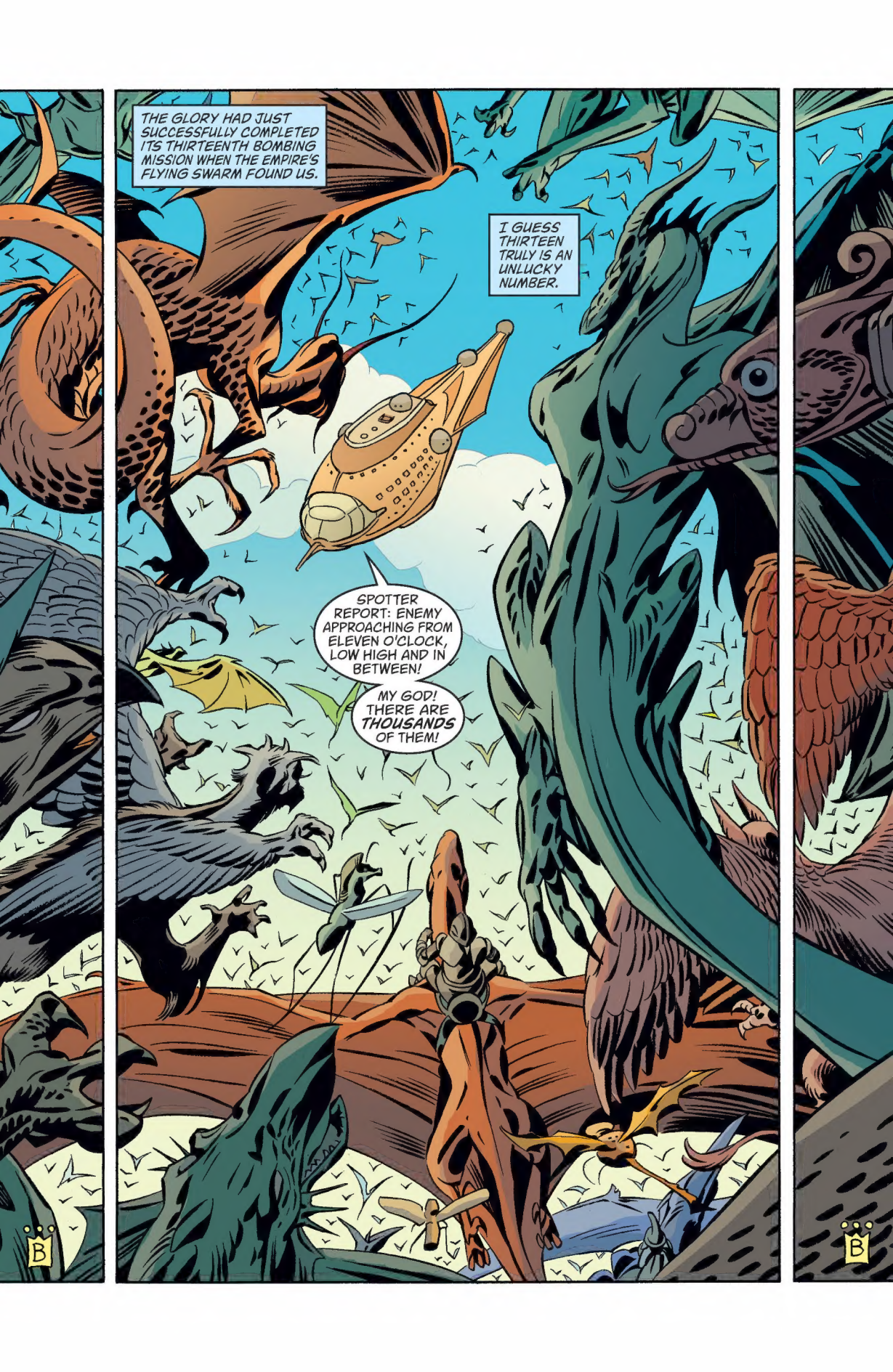


AH, NO FAIR! HOW COME WE CAN'T PLAY **ARMY**, AUNTIE ROSE?

BECAUSE WE'RE SURROUNDED BY REAL **ARMY** FABLES, WITH VERY **REAL**, VERY **DEADLY** WEAPONS.

AND WE DON'T WANT THEM TO BE STARTLED BY SOMEONE SUDDENLY YELLING "**BANG**, YOU'RE **DEAD**."





THE GLORY HAD JUST SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED ITS THIRTEENTH BOMBING MISSION WHEN THE EMPIRE'S FLYING SWARM FOUND US.

I GUESS THIRTEEN TRULY IS AN UNLUCKY NUMBER.

SPOTTER REPORT: ENEMY APPROACHING FROM ELEVEN O'CLOCK, LOW HIGH AND IN BETWEEN!

MY GOD! THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF THEM!



WE'RE DOOMED.

SECURE THE EXTRANEOUS CHATTER, CREWMAN.

SET BATTLE STATIONS THROUGHOUT THE SHIP. ALL GUN PORTS OPEN. ALL GUNS HOT.



COMBAT CONDITION IS FULL METAL STORM.

FIRE EVERYTHING WE HAVE AS FAST AS WE CAN. I BETTER NOT FIND ONE UNFIRED SHELL OR CARTRIDGE AT THE CONCLUSION OF TODAY'S ACTION!



AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME A SMALL IMPERIAL PATROL STUMBLED ACROSS FORT BRAVO.

LOOK, CAP'N. WHAT IN THE MANY HELLS IS THAT?

I'LL BE DAMNED AND ROASTED IF I KNOW. WE'VE BEEN WALKING TOWARDS IT FOR THREE MILES AND WE'RE JUST SEEING IT FOR THE FIRST TIME NOW?



BAD LUCK ALL AROUND, RIGHT?

THAT'S EVIDENCE OF DIRE SORCERY, THAT'S FOR DAMN SURE. AND IT'S NOT AN AUTHORIZED PROJECT, OR WE'D HAVE RUN ACROSS IMPERIAL PICKETS BY NOW.

ORDERLY, PREPARE A MESSAGE SPRITE. OPEN ONE THAT WILL HOME IN ON THE IMPERIAL CITY. WE NEED TO REPORT THIS POST HASTE.



NEXT: MANY THINGS BLOW UP BIG TIME.

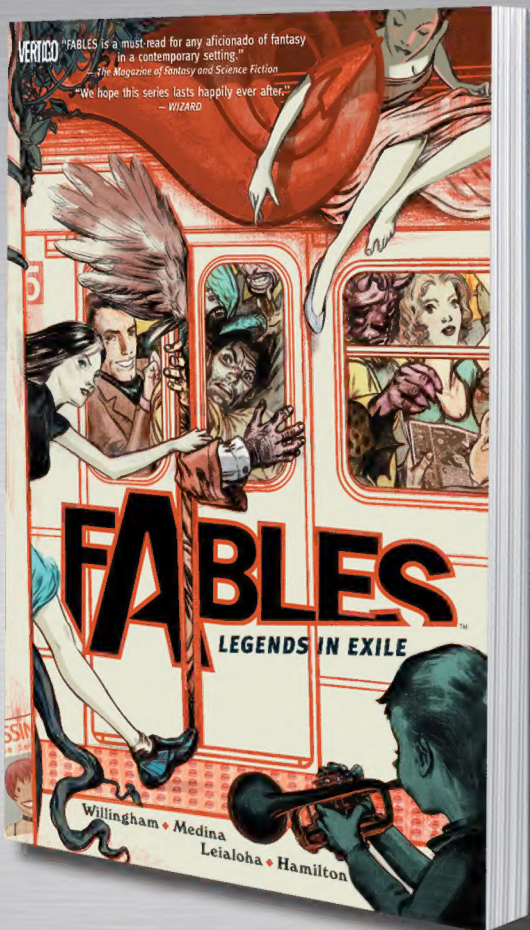
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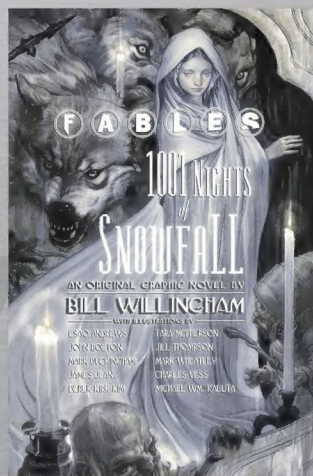
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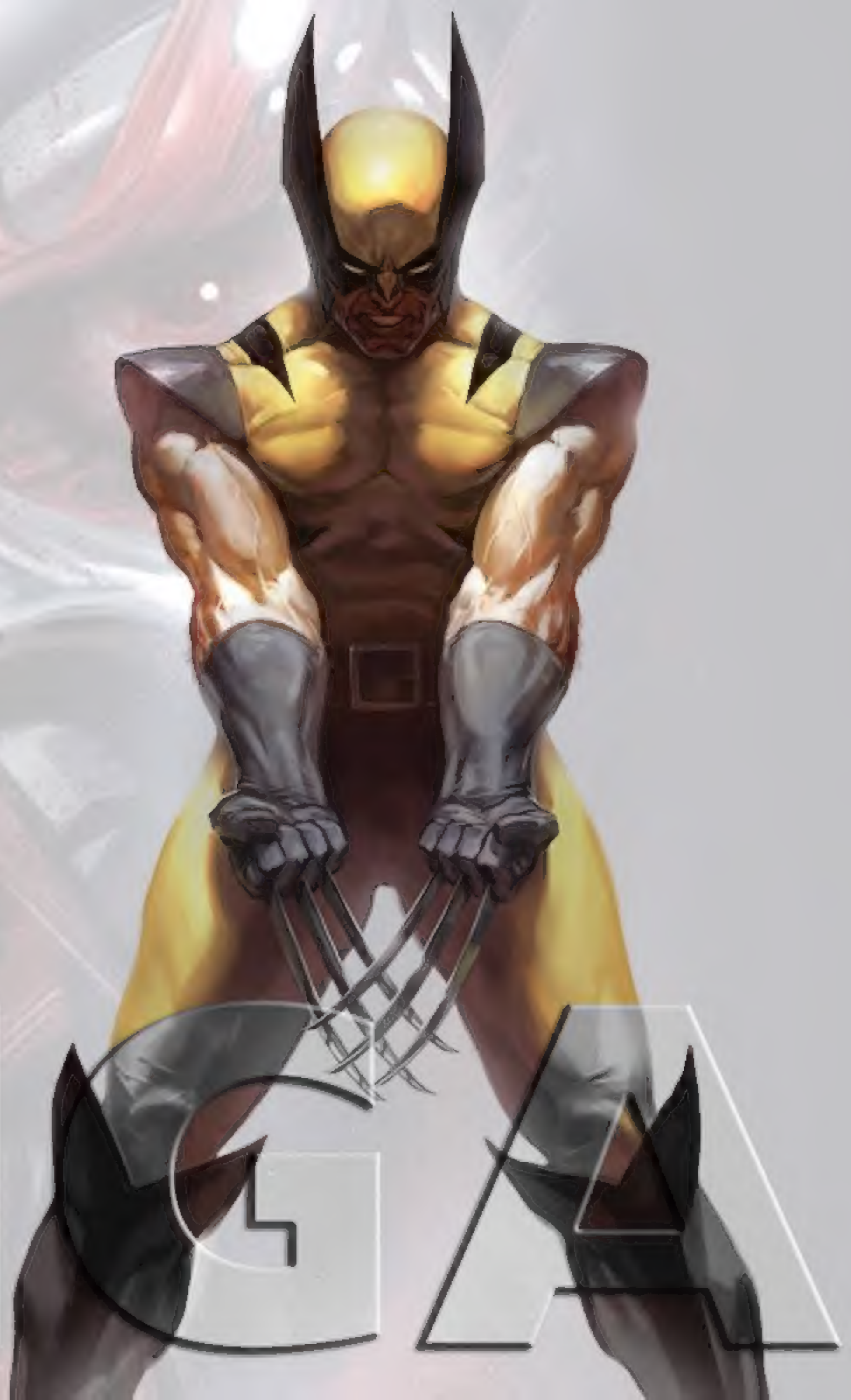


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